Review

Challenges facing Chinese International students studying in the United States

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Chinese international students often find it challenging to adjust to attending college in the United States (US). There is limited research addressing Chinese international college students' adjustment in the US. Drawing on what literature exists combined with research addressing Chinese immigrants' transition and international students' transition, this article examines strategies to help Chinese international students successfully make this adjustment. Educating the Chinese international students, educators and counselors about the challenges as well as offering strategies to overcome these challenges may help students succeed in a new educational system and a new culture.

Key words: Chinese International Students, college adjustment, success strategies for college.

INTRODUCTION

The number of Chinese students who are coming to study in the United States has increased significantly in recent years. According to the statistics provided by the Institute of International Education (2014a), Chinese international students made up 18.5% of the total international student population between the years 2009 and 2010, and the percentage steadily grew to 21.8% between 2010 and 2011, and 25.4% between 2011 and 2012 (Institute of International Education, 2014a). Between 2013 and 2014, the Chinese international students made up 31.0% of the total population of international students in the US, making Chinese students the largest international student group in the US (Institute of International Education, 2014b). As China

rises as one of the major economies in the world, it has become increasingly involved in the wave of globalization and its citizens are seeking opportunities to receive a Western education (Institute of International Education, 2014b).

Even though there is a rapid increase in Chinese international students studying in the US, there is limited research about the adjustment of Chinese international students in the US. Adapting to a new culture is one of the bigger adjustments that must be made when transitioning to college in a new country (Ye, 2006). Different strategies can lead to changes in behaviors that can help support the necessary psychological and sociological adaptations these

students must make (Bertram et al., 2014).

According to Lillyman and Bennett (2014), there are numerous benefits for international students studying abroad. For the Chinese international students, studying abroad offers an exciting opportunity to mix with students and faculty from other countries, which may increase their level of confidence (Warring, 2010). In addition, students' views are challenged as they experience personal development and become independent thinkers and agents for change (Lillyman and Bennett, 2014). Furthermore, due to the education they receive in the US, these students can become globally employable and leaders in their field when they return home (Campbell, 2010).

There are benefits to institutions hosting international students (Lillyman and Bennet, 2014; Perry, 2016). For the host institution, financial gain is one benefit. In 2013, international students contributed approximately $27 billion to the US economy, an increase of $3 billion from the prior year (Institute of International Education, 2014b). Apart from financial gain, other benefits include an increased profile among international students, which can improve the understanding of cross-cultural communication for the host institution. In addition, international students often become involved in the local Chinese life and the local community. This could help the institution become better connected to the local Chinese community. When there is a large population of international students, it may internationalize the program and increase opportunities for international cooperation between different institutions from different countries. This is also a process of internationalization, and the internalization of the institution is likely to improve the international reputation and enhance international cooperation (Lillyman and Bennett, 2014). Having Chinese students on campus also potentially brings an additional ethnic, cultural and global perspective and worldview. This is beneficial to the institution and important to other students in the classroom and learning environment.

THE CHALLENGES

The process of cultural adjustment is viewed as a struggle for young Chinese international students in the United States (Flannery and Wieman, 1989; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Jung et al., 2007). International students may experience cultural shock, among other challenges such as being away from families, and lack of social support, while adapting in the host country (Arasaratnam and Doerfel, 2005; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Smith and Khwaja, 2011; Spencer-Rogers and McGovern, 2002; Williams and Johnson, 2011).

There is substantial research on Chinese immigrant students in the US but a limited number of research articles on international students in the US (Bennett,

2008; Kim et al., 2009; Yeh, 2003; Yeh et al., 2008; Zhang and Goodson, 2011). The research on Chinese immigrant students offers insights about the process of cultural adjustment for the Chinese international students. According to Ye (2006), international students are defined as a special group who live in a foreign country pursuing an educational goal. Unlike immigrants, the majority of international students plan to go back home after they finish their degree.

The Chinese immigrant students, especially those who have arrived in the US recently, may have many similarities with the Chinese international students in terms of previous cultural experience, their identity with the Chinese culture, and language (Tsai et al., 2000). However, these two groups differ in that immigrant students may arrive with their family and are allowed to work in the United States. They may believe there is a need to establish a long-term relationship with the mainstream American culture, whereas international students may be curious about the culture but they do not necessarily intend to stay in the US.

Due to the similarities between Chinese international students and first generation Chinese immigrant students, the findings in the literature can, at times, be generalized to Chinese international students (Tsai et al., 2000). Studies have been implemented to investigate the variables that may influence the process of acculturation in Chinese immigrant students. These variables include language proficiency, age, social support, family support, cultural differences, and years of stay in the host country. In the study of Chinese immigrant students, the search has also focused on the special characteristics of the Chinese culture and the potential identity crisis between the Chinese culture and American culture (Kwan and Sodowsky, 1997).

ADAPTATION VARIABLES

Adapting to a new culture is viewed as requiring a dynamic shift in personal identification (Tran, 2011). The process is a dual process including cultural and psychological change. Many international students have reported the adaption as a positive experience, though the process might be challenging. The cultural adaption is perceived as a process that enhances international student's intercultural communication competence (Lillyman and Bennett, 2014).

Based on the literature addressing both international students and Chinese immigrants, the prominent variables that influence Chinese international students' ability to adapt to life in the US include (a) cultural distance, (b) cultural shock, (c) social support, (d) stress and anxiety, (e) language barriers, and (f) classroom transition. In addition, Wilton and Constantine (2003) studied the relationships among length of stay in the US, cultural adjustment difficulties, and psychological distress

in a sample of Asian and Latin American students attending college in the US. Their findings suggested the length of stay in the US is negatively associated with acculturative stress. Both Asian and Latin American students who had resided in the US for longer periods tended to report lower levels of distress in adjusting to U.S. cultural norms. These students may also have more established social support networks than individuals who have recently immigrated into the US (Tsai et al., 2000). Wilton and Constantine (2003) also suggested there is relationship between acculturative stress and psychological health. When acculturative stress interplays with other stressors such as financial difficulties and academic pressure, this might trigger mental health problems.

Cultural distance

Redmond (2000) reported that students might experience different types of stress when encountering different cultures and identified four dimensions of culture: (a) power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) individualism/collectivism, and (d) masculinity/femininity. The differences of the four dimensions between cultures Redmond (2000) referred to as "cultural distance."

Power distance represents the degree to which members of a culture accept that institutions and organizations have power (Redmond, 2000). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which members of a culture feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. Individualist cultures place higher emphasis on individual goals; collectivist cultures place higher emphasis on group goals. Redmond (2000: 152) used masculinity as a descriptor of those cultures that have "preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material success". On the other hand, femininity cultures, according to Redmond (2000), emphasize the importance of relationships, caring for the weak, and the quality of life.

Redmond (2000) argued that masculinity/femininity dimensions reflect "patterns of thinking, feeling and acting" (p.152). Therefore, they play an important role in intercultural interactions. Gudykunst and Tingtoomey (1988) reported that cultural variability strongly affects social relationships. For example, they reported that members from a femininity culture might perceive someone from masculine culture as adopting an excessively assertive style of communication, even though the assertive style communication is considered a norm in the masculine culture. Redmond (2000) concluded that the greater the differences in these four dimensions, the more difficulties individual members of a culture may experience when living in another culture.

The greater the distance between the native culture and the host culture, the more difficult it may be for the students to have accurate predictions and interpretations of the behaviors in the host culture (Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Redmond and Bunyi, 1993). For Chinese international students who study in the US, the cultural distance between Chinese culture and American culture is relatively far, and therefore their acculturative stress may be high (Redmond, 2000; Yan and Berliner, 2009).

Cultural shock

The ethnographic descriptions of Chinese and American culture differ immensely in their cultural orientations. "Chinese culture has been described as emphasizing interpersonal relationships, the collective, obedience to authority, and emotional moderation and control" (Tsai et al., 2000: 304). On the other hand, the mainstream American culture is described as supporting rugged individualism, defiance of authority, and open emotional expression (Tsai et al., 2000). For Chinese international students, when encountering a culture vastly different from their own, it is probable they will experience cultural shock. Because Chinese international students are new to the host country, and their plan of staying in the country is temporary, they might experience homesickness (Tsai et al., 2000).

The cultural adaptation process can be argued to be a never ceasing process. For example, according to Tsai etmal (2000), Chinese immigrants who have stayed in the United States for more than a decade may experience a cultural identity crisis, as they are legally considered American citizens but perceived as an outsider or a foreigner in their own country (Sue and Sue, 2013). However, Chinese international students are legally considered "aliens", and they identify themselves as foreigners in the US; therefore, there is less of an identity crisis for Chinese international students. However, the process of cultural adjustment never stops for either group, because it is a constant reality that they live in the US, a foreign country whose culture is vastly different from their own. However, some students reported viewing cultural shock as a positive experience; it is then interesting to consider how they view their own identity in a foreign country while being treated as a foreigner, which has a negative meaning in the English language (Lillyman and Bennet, 2014; Pan et al., 2013).

Social support

Kashima and Loh (2006) looked at Asian international students' acculturation to Australia and found that personal ties with international, co-national, and local Australian students significantly influenced acculturation. Kashima and Loh (2006) divided international students' friendship patterns into three categories or networks. First, the mono-cultural network referred to the close friendships with other co-national international students, which comprised of the primary social network for

international students. Second, the bicultural network was a network of academics, students and advisors. The bicultural network was the international students' secondary network. Third, the multicultural network was categorized as a network connected to other internationals living in Australia. The co-national ties helped international students stay connected with their cultural heritage. The bicultural network aimed to assist international students function academically, and the multicultural network was used for entertainment and recreational purposes. Due to the short cultural distance between Australia and the US, the experiences of international students in Australia might be similar to that of Chinese international students in the US.

Kashima and Loh (2006) argued that social ties seen in the various networks play an important role in helping newcomers' psychological adjustment, or emotional wellbeing and satisfaction during the cultural transition. For example, they found that strong ties with co-nationals offer psychological support and help the newcomers with a cultural identity related to their own cultural heritage

Kosic et al. (2004) reported that Asian international students face the task of learning about interpersonal norms. Their study indicated that international students with more local and international ties seem to more easily adapt to the new culture, whereas those who have more co-national ties, but less international ties seem to have difficulties with cultural adjustment.

Individual international students may experience different levels of acculturative stress (Ye, 2006). Among all international students studying in the United States, Asian international students might need to put greater efforts into the adaptation process due to larger cultural distance (Ye, 2006). Based on the framework provided by Redmond (2000), in terms of the four dimensions of cultural distance, the United States and other western European cultures are at extremes of individualism, whereas Asian countries including Indonesia, South Korea and China show a strong collectivist orientation (Lustig and Koester, 2003). Ye (2006) argued that this indicated there are basic differences in cultural values.

Stress and anxiety

According to Yeh (2003), previous researchers have studied specific concerns about Asian immigrant youth. For example, Asian immigrant youth often had high expectations about the host country before they came to the United States. However, after they arrived in the US, their expectations were not always met and consequently they often felt disappointed (Homma-True, 1997; Uba, 1994). Furthermore, when high expectations are not met, young Asian immigrant youth may experience depression, disappointment, resentment, and cultural shock (Yeh, 2003). Those students who hold unrealistic high expectations about their competence and their lives in the

United States may suffer from a deep sense of loss accompanied with painful feelings of inferiority (Sandhu, 1995).

According to Lillyman and Bennett (2014), international students experience a mix of excitement and anxiety when they first arrive in the host country. According to Brown and Holloway (2008), moving to a new environment is often one of the most traumatic events in a person's life. For international students who move to the US, the transition is significant and they are in great need of support to smooth the transition.

International students who choose to study in the US may face various other stressors in the host country (Kim and Kim, 2010; Lillyman and Bennett, 2014). For most international students, the decision to study abroad generally involves a large personal, social, and financial investment. Therefore, the international students may feel the pressure to succeed as a result of this investment. It could be more challenging for international students who have language barriers than their American counterparts to complete an undergraduate degree (Hendrikson et al., 2011; Jung et al., 2007). The challenge and the pressure may cause anxiety for some international students.

Asian Americans are perceived as the role model ethnic minority in the mainstream American culture. Often it is assumed that Asian Americans are free from psychological problems (Sue and Sue, 2013; Yeh, 2003). However, Wilton and Constantine (2003) reported that Asian Americans tend to downplay their psychological problems due to the shame attached to seeking counseling for mental health problems. Asian Americans may present their difficulties in academic and career choices when seeking help from counselors. The real problems beneath the surface may be academic pressure and other psychological problems that they try not to speak about in their lives (Wilton and Constantine, 2003).

Findings have suggested that acculturation is related to mental health (Jung et al., 2007; Yeh, 2003). International students may experience anxieties and pressures when they study in a foreign country. When these anxieties and pressures exceed the normal level, the students may have mental health issues.

Language barrier

The English language was identified as a major problem for some international students (Church, 1982; Ying, 1996). English proficiency is significantly related to academic success and social adjustment (Flannery and Wieman, 1989). A language deficiency may cause lack of participation in the classroom on the international students' part. Limited English proficiency might be evident in international students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. In addition, international students may require more time for reading and writing, which may interfere with their academic performance if

an exam is set to be finished within a limited time. Also, language deficiency may cause international students to doubt their success in their programs (Lin and Yi, 1997). For Chinese male students, this may be more challenging due to their fear of disappointment when making mistakes.

Lack of English proficiency may cause international students to experience social anxiety and confusion (Redmond, 2000). The language barrier can be a factor that contributes to the social isolation of Chinese international students in the host country (Karuppan and Barari, 2011). According to Bertram et al. (2014), English proficiency is reported as one of the constant stressors during the acculturative process. Their study reported that linguistic deficiency was perceived as the major block for the Chinese international students' participation in social engagement and led them to miss social situations (Spencer-Rogers and McGovern, 2002). Chinese international students also reported feeling disconnected from their environment and surroundings due to language barriers and different life experiences (Huang, 2012).

Speaking with an accent is another factor that affects international students' ability to function in social and academic settings. Based on an accent, listeners will evaluate the speaker's competence, social status, social attractiveness, personality, and similarity to the listener (Giles, 1970). In addition, Fuertez et al. (2002) pointed out that a nonnative accent can lead to stereotyping and discrimination on the listeners' part, whereas listeners associate a standard English accent with higher social status, intelligence and education.

Classroom transition

Classroom transition has been described as the "experiences of acute frustration, confusion and anxiety experienced by students who are exposed to unfamiliar learning and teaching methods, bombarded by unexpected and disorienting cues, and subjected to ambiguous and conflicting expectations" (Griffiths et al., 2005: 275). Chinese international students might experience these frustrations transitioning to classrooms in the US due to the cultural and educational differences between China and the US (Karuppan and Barari, 2011). For example, Chinese students view their professors as authority figures in their fields (Huang, 2012). They may not feel comfortable challenging the opinions of their professors. In addition, discussion in the classroom among the students is not a familiar teaching style for Chinese students, because in the Chinese culture it is considered impolite to constantly talk about personal opinions. Furthermore, the topics in the discussions are more relevant to American culture, which might be less relevant to the Chinese students (Huang, 2012; Yan and Berliner, 2009).

Huang (2012) reported on the various aspects of classroom transition that Chinese international students experienced in the classroom environment in the US. First, Chinese international students feel uncomfortable participating in classroom discussions, asking questions in class, and having critical arguments (Durkin, 2011). Huang (2012) and Parris-Kid and Barnet (2011) argue that unfamiliarity with the learning environment may discourage the learner from participating in classroom discussions. Furthermore, many American instructors indicated frustrations in engaging Chinese international students in classroom activities. Some teaching strategies that worked well with American students seemed ineffective with Chinese international students (Gu, 2011).

Huang (2012) argued that classroom transition also involves other factors. For example, when Chinese international students take classes in the US, their familiar learning context is lost. Therefore, Chinese international students might have to spend more time and make more effort to synthesize information to resolve their cognitive conflicts than their American counterparts in order to effectively participate in classroom activities (Huang, 2012). Furthermore, the content of learning materials, especially for the social sciences, is likely to be more relevant to American culture and it might take some time for Chinese international students to adjust (Zhao and Bourne, 2011). Learning in a foreign environment involves the learners' prior knowledge about cultural taboos, social expectations, learning approaches and the subject matter. What is common sense for learners from the mainstream American culture may be novel to Chinese international students (Huang, 2012).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Chinese international students encounter challenges while studying in the US, but relevant literature also proposes possible solutions to the challenges that Chinese international students face. The recommendations include helping with language barriers, increasing social support, advocacy to improve living conditions in the US, seeking counseling services, and smoothing the classroom transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HELPING WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Many Chinese international students find it difficult to communicate in English when they first arrive in the US (Brown and Holloway, 2008). English is taught as a foreign language in China and many Chinese international students do not feel comfortable speaking English in various situations. The variables that influence acculturation are often interwoven together. Social

contact with the English native speakers may help improve a student's English and ease the process of acculturation. However, limited English may cause anxiety for Chinese students when communicating with native speakers.

In order to be successful with their academic study in the US, international students need to have sufficient language proficiency to complete their programs in English. Educators play an important role in assisting international students to overcome language barriers (Lee, 2013). First, educators should acknowledge their own biases toward imperfect English. Accented English does not indicate any deficiency in English or low level of intelligence (Skow and Stephen, 1999). Lee (2013) reported that one way to increase the tolerance of accented English is to invite speakers with various accents and cultural backgrounds to give presentations in their fields. International students may think it inspirational that someone from a similar background is successful in their field (Lee, 2013). In addition, educators need to be more patient and learn about the differences in communication styles, word choice and nonverbal expressions. For example, Chinese international students may spontaneously translate from their native language to English, which may have completely different connotations in the English language. Lee described a Taiwanese graduate student's reply to her supervisor's question, "How are you feeling?" after she failed her comprehensive exam. Her reply was "I want to die!" This answer was shocking for her supervisor who believed the student had thoughts of suicidal. However, "I want to die!" is an expression of frustration in the Chinese language.

Social contact supports language proficiency and adjustment

According to Pan et al. (2013), establishing a social network in the host country can contribute to international students' adjustment to the new environment. For example, exposure to a new culture offers an opportunity to enhance intercultural communication skills and intercultural competence. In addition, Gill (2007) reported that reconstructing social networking in the host country significantly improved international students communication skills and developed their language and interpersonal skills. The experience of interacting with different educational and cultural environments helps international students function effectively both in the host and home countries (Gu et al., 2010). According to Kashima and Loh (2006), social contact with the local people would help the newcomers to adapt to the new culture.

However, social contact is not limited to social interactions with American students. According to Swagler and Ellis (2003), Taiwanese international students reported that missing family, friends, and their Taiwanese social network was a source of stress in the United States. They expressed their emotional distress resulting from constantly speaking in a foreign language in an immersed environment. However, according to their study, students who have Taiwanese friends and interaction with American students reported the most satisfaction with their studying experience in the US. According to their research, the more adjusted individuals seem to have both contacts with their Taiwanese friends and American friends (Swagler and Ellis, 2003).

Through events inside and outside the campuses, international students can get to know more people and improve their language skills and intercultural competence.

Counseling services

Offering counseling services could be one of the solutions or supports that can be offered to assist Chinese international students to smooth their cultural adjustment (Swagler and Ellis, 2003). However, there is a paradox for offering counseling services for Chinese international students. Chinese students are less likely to seek counseling treatment than their American counterparts, other than for somatic disorders (Lin and Yi, 1997). Asian Americans seem to mix mental health and physical discomfort (Sue and Sue, 2013). Furthermore, international students are reluctant to seek counseling services unless they are in a crisis (Swagler and Ellis, 2003).

When counseling individual Chinese international students, the counselors may consider various factors that may influence the therapeutic relationship. According to Leong (1986), when counseling Asian Americans, counselors should pay specific attention to client and therapist variables. For example, client variables include the clients' class background, linguistic background, and language proficiency. As for therapist variables, those could be the therapists' own cultural biases and prejudices against Asian Americans, lack of intercultural skills and training biases (Sue and Sue, 2013; Tyler et al., 1985).

Wilton and Constantine (2003) also suggested a solution to increase the chance for international students seeking counseling services. For example, the university counseling center may advocate for international students. They also suggested the university counseling center should consider hiring ethnic minority counselors to add 'face value' to gain trust from ethnical minority students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SMOOTHING THE CLASSROOM TRANSITION

One of the stressors that interplay with acculturative

stressors is academic stress. Lowinger and colleagues (2014) recommended that colleges establish programs that help improve students' academic self-efficacy. Studies suggest that Chinese international students have confidence in their professional performance but English hinders their verbal expression of their knowledge of the subject (Lee, 2013; Swagler and Ellis, 2003). Instructors are encouraged to use a variety of assessment tools to help international students feel less linguistic stress and improve their academic self-efficacy.

Kwok and Arpan (1994) reported that the internationalization of curriculum generally takes longer than the internationalization of campuses. Therefore, international students generally are expected to be the ones to adapt to the changes. Practical strategies for Chinese international students to adapt to the host country are helpful. However, studies also suggest that forcing Chinese international students to adopt the western values and approaches is not a consistently effective solution for them (Zhou et al., 2011).

Some scholars proposed institutional reform to better serve the diverse student population. Recommendations are proposed for program planners, mentors, and faculty members to discuss international students' personal development and adaptation to the new environment. In addition, support systems can be built into a mentoring culture to openly discuss the struggles that Chinese international students are likely to be experiencing. Furthermore, a mentoring culture may also include faculty mentoring, peer mentoring, and role model mentoring. The combination of mentoring systems may help the newcomers to foresee the possible specific needs from that country (Huang, 2012). The newcomer may draw some experiences from the mentoring system and can take preventative actions to solve some of the challenges they may encounter in the future.

Huang (2012) also argued that faculty members who teach or supervise Chinese international students may offer more factual information, culturally sensitive learning cues and more time and space for international students to participate in classroom activities and discussions. This reciprocal teaching and learning process can help the faculty members and the students to adapt to each other's teaching and learning strategies (Zhou et al., 2011). In addition, the instructors may adapt easier to future international students' learning needs based on their experience with previous international students that they have had.

Advocacy

International students have limited influence over the host society due to their immigrant status and their newness to the social system of the host country (Williams and Johnson, 2011). There is ample evidence that indicates having unfavorable relations with the citizens of the host country has serious consequences on the psychological well-being of international students (Leong and Chou, 1996; Paige, 1990). Although changing the stereotype against foreign students may not be easy, counselors and international office personnel may advocate or give statistics about the economic contributions that international students give to the US economy. The perceived threat, according to Spencer-Rogers and McGovern (2002), is that citizens of the host country see international students as threat to scholarships and competitors in the job market. However, the majority of international students (77%) in the US had tuition fees paid by their family members in their home countries and the majority return to their own countries after they finish their study in the US (Spencer-Rogers and McGovern, 2002).

Financial stressors and career concerns are challenges that Chinese international students face while studying in the US (Lee, 2013). Unlike other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, which give international students 20-hour work permits, the United States only authorizes international students to work on campus. This significantly reduces the employment opportunities for international students, which could make them financially vulnerable when something unexpected happens at home.

According to Lee (2013), the international office and international student body could offer guidance for international students applying for their limited financial aid programs even though the majority of financial aid programs and scholarships are only open to American students. In addition, some studies indicated that teaching assistantships are preferentially offered to domestic students due to international students' English deficiency (Kim and Kim, 2010). Lee (2013) suggested that by considering international students' eligibility for assistantships, the faculty member could promote their academic success and count on this population for their dedication and creativity when needed. This could include a 20-hour work permit per week, which could also be a way for the international students to have increased social contact with mainstream American society.

Furthermore, there are strict legal restrictions on international students doing internships in the US. International students go through a Curricular Practical Training (CPT) application, which requires complicated paperwork. If an international student does an internship for more than a year, he or she will lose the opportunity to work in the US after they graduation. Even if international students are allowed to apply for jobs in the US, most jobs are only open to US citizens or permanent residents. Furthermore, international students are only allowed to work in the US for one year. They need to apply for OPT if they intend to apply for jobs in the US. Compared with Canada, the UK and other western countries, the US has the strictest legal restrictions on international students working in the US (Lee, 2013).

Changing the overwhelmingly strict legal restrictions on international students is unlikely to happen unless some organizations in the US have political influence or international students' voices are heard. The advocacy cannot be done effectively by international students themselves due to their non-immigrant status, which puts them in a powerless and vulnerable position in the political world of the US.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The extent of cultural shock may be different for the European international students and Asian students due to different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). When applying the research of international students and Chinese immigrant students to the Chinese international students, caution is needed. Further research may be required to investigate Chinese international students to see whether the findings of other groups can be verified.

The literature in this paper is about Chinese international students in general. However, within this group, Chinese international students majoring in different disciplines may have individual needs. For example, the challenges of engineering students may be different from international students who major in clinical psychology or counseling (Lee, 2013). Furthermore, Chinese international students from different social and economic backgrounds may view their experiences differently in the United States and hence their challenges could also be different (Swagler and Ellis, 2003). Future research could be conducted studying the variations within the group of Chinese international students.

CONCLUSION

The article offers a comprehensive description of the challenges that Chinese international students face during their stay in the US. The literature offers support for the acculturative stress that they experience. For example, the description of cultural distance offers an explanation for the cultural shock that Chinese international students may experience when they encounter the mainstream American culture. Furthermore, the detailed description of cultural shock, stress and anxiety that Chinese international students may experience gives educators, international office personnel, and counselors working at the university counseling centers, a more clear idea of what the Chinese international students' life is like during their stay in the US.

Furthermore, discussions of social support and how social support may have a positive influence on international students can guide the people who work with Chinese international students to offer platforms for Chinese international students to establish their network and social support in the new environment. Through the platforms or events that aim to increase opportunities for Chinese international students to interact with people from various backgrounds, Chinese international students may realize the importance of establishing social support. At the same time, their intercultural competence may be significantly improved as well.

Finally, issues such as language barriers and classroom transition may offer insight on the educators' side about the reformation of curriculum to better suit the needs of Chinese international students. While helping international students improve their language proficiency, educators at the same time need to understand that native-speaker fluency can rarely be achieved. Therefore, accented and imperfect English should be acceptable for educators. At the same time, curriculum design and classroom activities should be designed to consider the needs of Chinese international students so their full potential can be reached in the new educational system.

The suggested strategies may help people in the tertiary educational setting, international office personnel and counselors working in university counseling centers to better understand the needs of Chinese international students and consequently be better prepared to help Chinese international students succeed in a new educational and cultural environment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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